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On The Go

By Masha Leon

OPEN UNIVERSITY HONORS CHANCELLOR JOEL KLEIN AND AMBASSADOR JOHN BOLTON

The March 26 American Friends of Open University of Israel Gala at the Plaza felt like a *simcha*. The buffet was superb; AFOU's president, **Ingeborg Rennert**, mingled and made sure everyone was happy, and the honorees' speeches were short. Board chairman **Malcolm Thomson** touted Israel's Open University's role in empowering a nation in which one-third of the population "lives in poverty, and another third can't afford education." Among the guests were New York City Police Commissioner **Raymond Kelly** and his wife, **Veronica**; Ambassador **Dore Gold**, and **Malcolm Hoenlein**, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. **John Bolton**, America's former ambassador to the United Nations, received the Tzedek Award, and New York Department of Education Chancellor **Joel Klein**, who lauded Bolton for his service to the nation and his "willingness to challenge [in the name of] what is right," received the Yigal Allon Award. Recalling his father's truncated education during the Depression, Klein said: "Today, your zip code, skin color and poverty will determine your education.... We will never fix education in America until we fix poverty." Still, he was upbeat: "America will get through, as we did in the past."

In her presentation of the Tzedek Award to Bolton, Rennert informed the audience that the award was inspired by the imperative from the Book of Deuteronomy: *Tzedek, tzedek tirdof*. "Justice and righteousness must you pursue in order that you may live," Rennert said. "Mr. Ambassador... you exemplify morality and decency in a society that shut its eyes to justice.... In the halls of the United Nations, you alone, singularly, had the courage to speak the truth.... You alone were the staunch defender of our democratic ideals and values. You did not fear your internal critics or external enemies." **Benjamin Tandowski**, AFOU board member, presented the Yigal Allon Award to Klein. He outlined the origin of this prestigious award: "Yigal Allon — statesman, warrior, philosopher and acting prime minister, along with Baroness Dorothy de Rothschild was the visionary behind the establishment of the Open University of Israel." Tandowski noted that "Allon, like our honoree [Joel Klein], understood that the future of Israel depended on a highly educated population."

Open University's new and first woman president, **Hagit Messer-Yaron**, offered brief welcoming remarks. The program notes informed that Messer-Yaron, who is a professor of electrical engineering at Tel Aviv University, is an "internationally acclaimed expert in statistical processing with application to source localization, communication and environmental systems." This left me and most of the guests linguistically in the dust. What may help translate this into common-speak is that she is a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, the world's foremost professional association for the advancement of

technology. She is the author of numerous scientific papers, including a pioneering article in the journal *Science*, titled "Environmental Monitoring by Wireless Communication Networks." Her book, "Capitalism and the Ivory Tower," was published in 2008.

The Open University of Israel is the country's largest university, educating one of every six students in the country. It affords Israel's active-duty soldiers, large immigrant population, the disabled, the indigent and yeshiva students the opportunity to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees.